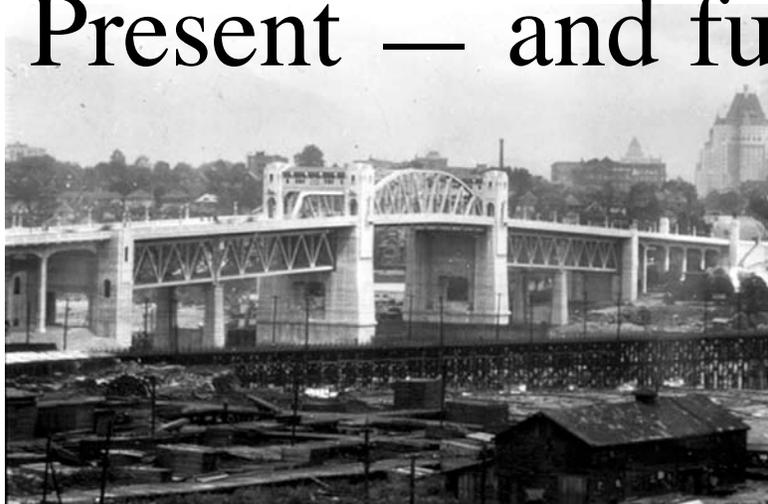


HERITAGE Vancouver N e w s l e t t e r

BURRARD BRIDGE

Past, Present — and future?



The Burrard Bridge is one of the primary landmarks of Vancouver, and is considered a civic icon. The origins of this historic structure lie in the optimistic recommendations of the city's first comprehensive *town plan*, the Bartholomew Plan, which was released just before the Great Depression. Major J.R. Grant, a consulting engineer, was commissioned to design the high-level bridge that was required to handle traffic to the new residential developments in Point Grey and the new UBC campus. It was recognized that this prominent location deserved a landmark, and its high and bulky mass would also screen a proposed civic centre on Burrard Street from the visual clutter of False Creek industry.

Construction commenced in 1930. Grant's utilitarian structure was beautified by associated architects Sharp & Thompson, and decorated with the sculpture of Charles Marega. The resulting structure was a masterpiece of the Art Deco style, an impressive blend of structural necessity and artistic vision. The Burrard Bridge opened with a grand celebration on July 1, 1932, and it remains one of the principal gateways to downtown Vancouver.

Increasing traffic demands, ongoing maintenance issues and a lack of separation between vehicular, cycling and pedestrian traffic have prompted the City of Vancouver to examine options for reconfiguring the Bridge.

Extensive alterations were originally proposed in 1995-1996 but never went past the conceptual phase. Today, as part of the current False Creek Crossings Study, the City is looking at options for Burrard Bridge that include removing the existing concrete railings and widening the structure. These options would radically alter its appearance. As a stakeholder in the Crossings Study, Heritage Vancouver has expressed its strong opposition to any option that will result in a loss of the Bridge's heritage character.

In order to better understand the heritage issues associated with the Burrard Bridge, the City of Vancouver commissioned a heritage assessment in 2001. The author of the report, Donald Luxton, will present an historical overview of the history and construction of the bridge, including some surprising visual material that has been recently unearthed, at the next meeting of Heritage Vancouver. Join us on January 16th to learn all about one of our city's great landmarks.

**The Overhanging Future
of Burrard Bridge**
Wednesday, January 16, 7:30pm
The Vancouver Museum

Burrard Bridge is downtown Vancouver's ceremonial entrance, a landmark structure, and a triumph of civic architecture. Yet this Class A heritage resource is threatened if the City of Vancouver goes ahead with plans to add a pedestrian and cycle lane to the bridge deck. Come and hear about Don Luxton's recent research and find out how to get involved in preserving the integrity of this landmark.

Heritage Week
Monday, February 18 to Friday,
February 22

Heritage Week will soon be upon us. This year, Heritage Vancouver celebrates a 10th Anniversary, making the occasion particularly special for us. Watch for details on special activities jointly sponsored by Heritage Vancouver and the City of Vancouver.

The following tours will also be taking place during Heritage Week.

Night at the Orpheum
Wednesday, February 20, 7pm
Orpheum Theatre, Granville Street

Join us in the dress circle for the February meeting of Heritage Vancouver, to be followed by an extensive tour of the Theatre itself. Meet at the Box Office on the Granville Street side of the theatre. \$5 for members, \$10 for non-members.

Chinatown by Night
Friday, February 22,
8pm (rain or shine), Chinese
Cultural Centre, 50 East Pender Street

This Heritage Vancouver tour will offer another chance to take a different look at Chinatown, as John Atkin explores the history and architecture of this unique area in a series of evening tours. Don't forget to bring your flashlight. Meet in the courtyard of the Chinese Cultural Center, by the gate. \$5 for members, \$10 for non-members.



Photo: Robert Moffatt 2003

Thornton house broke new ground

by *Robert Moffatt*

Peter Thornton house I
4785 Piccadilly South, West Vancouver
Peter Thornton 1938-39

While Modernist domestic architecture in Vancouver developed rapidly through the late 1940s and 1950s, the seeds were planted with a handful of innovative houses designed prior to the Second World War. The houses that Vancouver architects C.B.K. Van Norman, Bob Berwick, Peter Thornton and artist B.C. Binning built for themselves were at the forefront of architecture in North America and Europe, and inspired many later houses in the Vancouver area and across Canada.

Their houses were a radical break from the traditional Tudor, Colonial and Georgian styles popular at the time. Clean-lined, rigorously functional and devoid of any historical ornament, these houses explored new materials, new construction techniques and an increased sensitivity to the site. Socially, they represented a casual, informal lifestyle that became widely favoured during the post-war years.

Peter Thornton studied at the Architectural Association in London from 1933 to 1938, where he was exposed to the latest in British modernism as well as the work of Bauhaus figures like Walter Gropius, Marcel Breuer and other exiles from war-clouded Europe. Upon arriving in Vancouver

in 1938 he built a house for his mother and himself overlooking the waterfront in Caulfeild, a village of English cottages dotted along narrow, meandering lanes below Marine Drive.

Thornton's European influences are apparent in the flat-roofed, two-story structure. The house had to be built without a mortgage — at the time, lending authorities considered a house with a flat roof too unaesthetic to be sellable and therefore a poor mortgage risk. Thornton oriented the main interior spaces to the front of the house, the southern exposure maximizing sunlight and views of the garden and the ocean. On the ground floor, large plate-glass windows and sliding doors open onto patio terraces; upstairs, the bedrooms open onto a sundeck stretching the length of the house. Roof overhangs shield the windows from summer sun, while a fireplace wall of fieldstone visually integrates the house with the stone garden walls and the rocky beach. The main entrance and auto court were originally located at the rear of the house to maximize space for the front garden; later subdividing of the property moved the entry to the front.

The Thornton house is listed as a primary building in the West Vancouver heritage inventory and remains in fair condition.

REPORT

Heritage Vancouver's Top Ten Endangered List — One Year Later

Sites	Status	Comments
1. Firehalls No.13 (Riley Park) & No.15 (Renfrew)	Going...	The firemen have moved out of No.13 Firehall and into temporary quarters near 41st and Fraser. The hall itself is coming down as you read this. Over at No.15 Firehall, they're getting ready to move out. The building is scheduled to come down sometime this year. (Firehall No.13 was destroyed by fire on January 14)
2. Shaw House	Win some, lose some	The house is to be moved onto a corner lot on Ash Street, where it will sit in an open park space. Although it will lose its original site and be reoriented to sit east/west, the building will be completely restored and designated. The developer has agreed to retain as much of the original external material as possible.
3. Alexandra Park Cottages	Gone	The two cottages came down last summer and construction of a luxury condominium has already started. Without a place on the Heritage Register, the cottages were unprotected and a demolition permit had already been granted when they made our top ten list. There were really no viable development alternatives on that small site that would have allowed the houses to be retained—but we can regret the loss.
4. Vancouver General Hospital	Win some, lose some	Under the rezoning approval, the Heather Pavilion will be retained (minus the two slightly later wings that are indistinguishable from the original) but, with the possible exception of the Nurses' Residence, no other structures of historic value within the application area will be saved. In future years, Heritage Vancouver hopes to be able to advocate the retention of individual buildings on a case by case basis as they come up for redevelopment.
5. Opsal Steel	Status quo	On death row due to intended redevelopment and getting more decrepit every day.
6. BC Electric Showroom/ Other Buildings Lower 600 Block Granville	Win some, lose some	Although the rest of the block, with some of the oldest buildings in Vancouver, has come down, the facades of the BC Electric Showroom remain. Also still standing, with its final destiny unknown, is the 1892 Victorian brick facade immediately adjacent to the present Bay building. Depending on the results of current consultations, the facade, hidden for many years, may be saved.
7. Pantages Theatre No.1	Status quo	The owners are still working on efforts to rehabilitate the building as a music and entertainment venue. Meanwhile, it is also getting more decrepit every day.
8. Stanley Park	Win some, lose some	The original Prospect Point bridge has been replaced, the other two overpasses are going and the straightening of the causeway will result in the loss of significant trees and landscaping. On the positive side, Heritage Vancouver was influential in discouraging options that would have resulted in an elevated freeway through the park entrance, and in getting the design of the new overpasses to recall the old. They may incorporate the original concrete railings, or replica railings as has the new Prospect Point bridge.
9. 100 Block West Hastings / Ralph Block	Status quo	This area, once the center of downtown Vancouver, sits and deteriorates.
10. Ridley House	Going...	The Ridley House is in an industrial area in Kitsilano. The stained glass has been removed (presumably sold to an antique building supply dealer) and the house is boarded up. Still standing but....

THE CITY OF VANCOUVER 2002 HERITAGE AWARDS

Raising Heritage Awareness

Dear Members,

Last year Heritage Vancouver published a Top Ten Endangered List. The Vancouver Sun published our article with photographs and we distributed close to 2,000 copies of our newsletter containing information about the structures on the list. The purpose of this initiative was to raise awareness of Vancouver's threatened heritage by heightening media exposure and providing a focus for our ongoing activities. Now, with the distance of a year, it is time to reflect on the success of this initiative.

One of our top ten, the BC Electric Showroom and its companion buildings on the 600 block Granville, became a focal point for media coverage as a result of our successful July walking tour. The imminent destruction of the block was featured in the Vancouver Sun, the Courier, the National Post, The Heritage Society of BC newsletter, CBC radio, Radio Canada and several other local radio stations. We know the coverage reached Ottawa and got Heritage Canada involved. On a more anecdotal note, a heritage planner at Vancouver city hall referred to the soon-to-be-restored Shaw House as "one of the buildings on your endangered list." When asked her opinion about the effectiveness of the list, one of our new members replied, "Here are ten buildings that I was not aware of before and now, BC Electric Showroom, the Shaw House, Firehall No.13, the Pantages are household names...that's success." As well, there is the impact we can't measure or even comment on. Who picked up a copy of our newsletter? Who was touched by something they read or heard? In our opinion, this initiative was one we want to repeat. Watch for the second annual list coming soon in this newsletter.

Handwritten signature of Janet Leduc

Janet Leduc
President, Heritage Vancouver

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The City of Vancouver is calling for nominations for their 2002 Heritage Awards. The purpose of the awards is to recognize the accomplishments of individuals and organizations who have furthered the goal of heritage conservation in the city. Anyone may submit a nomination for:

- restoration, rehabilitation, adaptive re-use or continued maintenance of a heritage building, a significant interior of a heritage building, or characteristic features of a heritage building
use of innovative engineering techniques or restoration/conservation methods in upgrading a heritage building (including seismic upgrading)
preservation of a heritage landscape
advocacy by a group or individual in preserving a heritage site or increasing public awareness of heritage issues
publication, education or exhibit that promotes heritage conservation

The Deadline for submissions is 4 p.m. Friday, February 1, 2002. Nomination forms and submission requirements can be obtained at <www.city.vancouver.bc.ca> or from Jeannie Bates (604-790-1143).

Join Heritage Vancouver

Membership valid one year from date of issue. Members receive a monthly newsletter, free admission to monthly speakers' programs and reduced rates for tours and other activities.

Charitable donation #1073758-52. Membership fees are not tax deductible.

Form with fields for Name, Address, City, Postal Code, Telephone, E-mail, and checkboxes for membership types (Individual, Family, Donation, Supporting, Corporate, Patrons) and a volunteer interest checkbox.

Please send cheque or money order to: Heritage Vancouver, P.O. Box 3336, Vancouver, BC V6B 3Y3